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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-first session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme Questions: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

(Item 4 (a))

Section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services

1. At its 14th and 15th meetings, on 20 June 2001, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/56/6 (sect.2)).

2. The representatives of the Secretary-General introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the budget section.

Discussion

3. General support was expressed for the activities undertaken by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. The view was expressed that the restructuring of the Department in 1997 and the integration of conference services of all United Nations headquarters in the Department had made the usage of conference services, facilities and resources of the Organization more efficient and cost-effective.

4. The importance of the activities under General Assembly affairs and conference services was stressed. Views were expressed that the progressive



introduction of new technologies in the conference-servicing process should lead to better quality of services, reduced costs and increased efficiency and productivity in the work of the Department. In that context, it was pointed out that the effects of remote translation and interpretation, computer-assisted translation and the introduction of speech-recognition systems should be constantly monitored and evaluated to ensure that high standards of quality and delivery of services are maintained. Emphasis was placed on the need for consistent compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/11 of 2 November 1995 on multilingualism in servicing the United Nations organs by the Department. Concern was expressed with regard to a persistent problem of the late issuance of documentation, insufficient quality of the translation and interpretation services in certain languages and the accumulated backlog in the production of the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs*.

5. Support was expressed for the introduction of a results-based presentation of the programme, with identifiable objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement with an emphasis on qualitative parameters. It was also stressed that the content of some indicators of achievement required further refinement, in particular through the development of common benchmarks and standards for equal conference services, with a view to allowing for measuring the level of quality of the services. On the other hand, a view was expressed that the programme narrative did not clearly demonstrate a linkage between the programme objectives and the proposed level of resources and productivity targets.

6. Concern was expressed over insufficient efforts by the Department to maintain a full complement of permanent staff in Vienna and Nairobi, which had resulted in prolonged vacancies and forced reliance on more expensive temporary assistance.

7. It was stressed that the Secretary-General must ensure that parliamentary documentation was available in accordance with the six-week rule for simultaneous distribution. A view was also expressed that the status of outsourcing of the translation services of documents and of the simultaneous availability of official documentation in electronic form in the six official languages on the United Nations web site should be reviewed by the General Assembly on the basis of the respective reports of the Secretary-General. It was also stressed that ways needed to be found to improve the quality and timely availability of official documentation.

8. The view was expressed that there was a need for the General Assembly to consider provisions in order to promote career development for the language services staff, and that this should be proposed in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, with the following amendments:**

Paragraph 2.7

At the end of the last sentence, replace the words "on an as-available basis from within the existing capacity of the Department" with the words "in

accordance with paragraph 4 of section I of General Assembly resolution 55/222 of 23 December 2000".

Paragraph 2.8

At the end of the fourth sentence, insert the phrase " , without prejudice to the mandates of the General Assembly".

Paragraph 2.19 (d)

At the end of the subparagraph, replace the words "within available resources" with the phrase " , in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and the relevant United Nations resolutions on decolonization".

Paragraph 2.46 (a)

After the first sentence, insert a new sentence, reading: "Translation and publishing of the *Repertoire of Practice of the Security Council* in the six official languages".

Paragraph 2.48

At the end of the fourth sentence, insert the phrase " , in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 54/248 and 55/222".

10. The Committee, having experienced difficulties in interpretation during its forty-first session, recommended to the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to review the effects of such difficulties on the functioning of meetings, and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on actions to be taken to remedy the situation.